HOW TO make the most of

Ramadan

in the light of Al-Qur’an and Authentic Hadith



“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you may learn self-restraint”(Al-Qur’an 2:183)

FOREWORD

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise is due to Allah (SWT), the Almighty. We all praise Him, seek His Help, and ask His Forgiveness. We seek refuge with Him from the evil of our souls, and from our sinful deeds. He whom Allah (SWT) guides, no one can misguide him, and whoever Allah (SWT) misguides, no one can guide him. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah (SWT), and I bear witness that Muhammad (pbuh) is truly His servant and Messenger.

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We pray to Allah (SWT) for guidance and help. Surely, He is over all things Powerful. May Allah (SWT) accept our effort and put it on our scale of good deeds on the Day of Resurrection to outweigh the evil deeds. Aameen.

ISLAMIC_KNOWLEDGE TEAM

FASTING IN RAMADAN

Ramadan (Sawm) is one of the five pillars of Islam and the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. The meaning of Sawm is to 'abstain'. In this month, Allah Subhana Wa Taala (SWT) has made it compulsory that the fasting be observed by day, and he has made the 'Taraweeh' (Ramadan nightly prayer) a 'Sunnah'. Fasting is to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and conjugal relations from dawn till sunset.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "There is a gate in Paradise called Ar-Raiyan, and those who observe fasting will enter through it on the Day of Resurrection and none except them will enter through it".
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 120)

During the month of Ramadan, the Prophet (pbuh) used to apportion to Ramadan a degree of worship that was not set aside to any other month. The Prophet (pbuh) spent his day in remembrance, recitation, learning and providing advice and training. His nights were spent in supplication and humiliation unto Allah (SWT), seeking His help, support, victory and guidance.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "If someone draws near to Allah during Ramadan with some good act he will be like one who fulfils an obligatory duty in another month, and he who fulfils an obligatory duty in it will be like one who fulfils seventy obligatory duties in another month". (Tirmidhi Hadith 1965)

Fasting earns great reward as clearly stated in the above Hadith. When Allah (SWT) rewards an action as purely His, then the reward is limitless.

The Prophet (pbuh) said that Allah (SWT), the Majestic and the Exalted, said "All actions a human being does are for himself except fasting. It is done for My sake, and I will give a reward for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied 10 times". (Sahih Bukhari Volume 3, Book 31, Number 118, & Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2564)

Ramadan is an annual training programme to refresh us for carrying out our duties towards Allah (SWT). Fasting develops self-control and helps us to overcome selfishness, greed, laziness and other faults. This month of patience gives us an opportunity to experience for ourselves what it is like to have an empty stomach. This develops our feeling for the poor and hungry people. Fasting teaches us to control the love of comfort.

If difficulty is experienced in fasting, one should bear it cheerfully and not complain. Should we feel fatigued at the time of Taraweeh (Ramadan nightly prayer), this too should be borne with fortitude.

It should also be borne in mind that fasting does not aim at inflicting punishment upon people or taking on unbearable burdens. The underlying idea behind it is to teach moderation and spiritual discipline so that human temptations may not become so wild and uncontrollable as to flout the commands of the Great Master. To be a true servant of Allah (SWT), it is essential that man should be able to conform his behaviour to the moral and spiritual discipline embodied in the Shari'ah of Islam. Fasting is indispensable for this moral and spiritual training.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of mercy are opened and the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained". (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2361)

The hadith below gives some very important points regarding Ramadan:

The Prophet (pbuh) said "Fasting is a shield or protection from the fire and from committing sins. If one is fasting, he should avoid sexual relation with his wife and quarrelling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, 'I am fasting.' There are two pleasures for the fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and other at the time when he will meet Allah; then he will be pleased because of his fasting." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 128)

In this month, the rebellious 'Shayateen' (Satans) are chained, so as not to provoke those evils which they normally do during months other than Ramadan. A question may arise here that, when the 'Shayateen' are chained, how it is that we still do see evil committed? The reply is that evil may not necessarily be caused by the rebellious 'Shayateen'. People have for eleven months lived in obedience to 'Shayateen' whims and wishes, and so performing evil deeds instigated by them becomes second nature. Consequently, evil is being done in and out of Ramadan.

Therefore the feelings and lessons we experience should stay with us throughout the year. In Al-Qur'an, Muslims are commanded to fast so that they may "become pious". This piety and devotion is especially felt during Ramadan, but we all must strive to make the feelings and attitude stay with us during our "normal" lives. That is the true goal and test of Ramadan.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Every servant of Allah who observes fast for a day in the way of Allah, Allah would remove, because of this day, his face farther from the Fire of Hell to the extent of seventy years' distance". (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2570)

Fasting is the way to piety and the fear of God. Fasting narrows the food and blood arteries. They are known to be canals of the devils, hence fasting reduces their insinuation. It further weakens carnal desires, thoughts and temptations of disobedience.

Fasting enhances bodily health. It gets rid of contaminated matter, eases the stomach, purifies the blood, eases the working of the heart, brightens the spirit, refines the soul and disciplines the character. When an individual fasts, his soul is humbled and his carnal desires are dispelled. There is a great reward for fasting, as it shows a Muslim obeying Allah (SWT) and submitting to His command.

FASTING IN THE MONTH OF SHA'BAN

The Prophet (pbuh) used to fast till one would say he would never stop fasting, and he would abandon fasting till one would say he would never fast. I never saw the Prophet fasting for a whole month except the month of Ramadan, and did not see him fasting in any month more than in the month of Shaban.(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 190)

The Prophet (pbuh) has told us not to fast one or two days before Ramadan as we need to keep our physical and spiritual strength to make the most of this blessed month.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "None of you should fast a day or two before the month of Ramadan unless he has habit of fasting (Nawafil) (and if his fasting coincides with that day) then he can fast that day."
(Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, No.138, Muslim, Book 006, Number 2382)

We should try our best to keep some fasts in Shaban.

The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have asked one of the Companions "Did you fast in the middle of Sha'ban?" The Companion replied, "No". Thereupon the Prophet (pbuh) said: "If you did not observe fast, then you should observe fast for two days".
(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2607)

THE WISDOM BEHIND FASTING

Fasting in Ramadan is not merely physically restraining from the obvious food and drink, but the total commitment of the servant's body and soul to the letter and spirit of fasting.

1) The fast of the <u>self,</u> means to be free from all carnal desires.
2) The fast of <u>mind</u> is avoiding thoughts about things other than Allah (SWT).
3) The fast of the <u>hand</u> is not touching/taking what does not belong to it.
4) The fast of the <u>nose</u> means not sniffing or smelling unlawful things.
5) The fast of the <u>feet</u> is not going places where sinful acts are propagated.
6) The fast of the <u>eye</u> is to prevent it from seeing forbidden things.

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be mindful of their chastity; this will be most conducive to their purity. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be mindful of their chastity, and not display their charms (in public) beyond what may (decently) be apparent thereof, hence let them draw their head-covering over their bosoms". (Al-Qur'an 24:30-31)

7) The fast of the <u>tongue</u> is guarding against lying, backbiting, slandering, reviling, abusing others, cursing, indecent conversation, swearing and false evidence. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe".

The Prophet (pbuh) said, ""Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 127)

8) The fast of the <u>ears</u> is not to listen to idle talk, gossip, lyrics and notes that contain obscene and indecent things. Listening to Al-Qur'an bears the fruit of faith, guidance, light and prosperity. It fills the heart with wisdom, tranquillity, intimacy and contentment. It is a source of protection from the dangerous, deviant and sinful thoughts.

9) The fast of the <u>heart</u> means casting out from it the love of worldly things and by emptying it of all corrupt material such as, false beliefs, evil suggestions, filthy intentions and degenerate thoughts.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart."
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 2, Number 49)

The believer's heart abstains from pride and egotism as these traits breaks its fast. Egotism is when the individual sees himself as perfect and better than others. The cure for this self-importance is to look at one's faults and short-comings, thousands of sins and misdeeds that one has committed, wrongs that one has done and forgotten, but knowledge of which are with Allah (SWT).

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "do they, perchance, envy other people for what God has granted them out of his bounty?" (Al-Qur'an 4:54)

The heart of the believer fasts and abstains from envy as envy lowers righteous deeds and stops its progress toward Allah (SWT).

AVOIDANCE OF THINGS THAT CONTRADICT SPIRIT OF FASTING

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "Eat and drink (freely), but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful!" (Al-Qur'an 7:31)

Some people who fast waste money on meals both at the beginning and the breaking of the fast in Ramadan. They prepare food enough for a crowd of people consisting of numerous dishes. Then, at the end of this, they only eat a little and throw the remainder into the refuse. This is contrary to the great teachings of Islam.

There are other people who fill the stomach with delicious foods at "Sehri", so that one does not feel hungry until "Iftaar". When opening their fast, they indulge in excessive eating and drinking. This however, defeats the purpose of fasting, one of which is to empty the stomach of all contaminated material by reducing the intake of food.

Many people spend their fasting hours sleeping. As a result it seems as if they did not fast. The wisdom of fasting is that the one who fasts should experience pangs of hunger and savour thirst in order to gain the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

There are also people who make no effort to do good by giving charity. They do not honour their tables by allowing others to break their fast with them.

WHAT DOES AND DOESN'T BREAK THE FAST

The Prophet (pbuh) said:" Neither vomiting, nor emission, nor cupping breaks the fast." (Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2370)

There are certain things that break a person's fast, the most obvious being those things that are explicitly forbidden during fasting, i.e. eating, drinking, sexual relations and during menstruation, for females. However, if one eats something forgetfully, then this fast does not have to be made up:

The Prophet said, "If somebody eats something forgetfully while he is fasting, then he should complete his fast, for Allah has made him eat and drink." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 154)

In terms of applying medicine, there is nothing which prevents us from using such as long as it is not entered through the mouth or nose:

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "I have a complaint in my eyes, so may I apply collyrium while I am fasting?" He replied, "Yes." (Tirmidhi Hadith 2010)

A certain degree of affection is allowed between spouses as this Hadith shows:

'A'isha reported, "The Prophet (pbuh) used to kiss me while observing fast and who among you can control his desire as the Prophet (pbuh) could control his desire." (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2438)

However, the Prophet (pbuh) did report the following Hadith:

A man asked the Prophet (pbuh) whether one who was fasting could embrace (his wife) and he gave him permission; but when another man came to him, and asked him, he forbade him. The one to whom he gave permission was an old man and the one whom he forbade was a youth.
(Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2381)

WHAT A SICK MAN DOES WHEN FASTING

There are some situations when a person can break their fast.

"If a man succumbs to an illness which makes fasting very difficult for him and exhausts him and wears him out, he can break his fast.
(Muwatta, Book 18, Number 18.15.41)

FASTING WHILST TRAVELLING

Hamza bin 'Amr Al-Aslami asked the Prophet, "Should I fast while travelling?" The Prophet replied, "You may fast if you wish, and you may not fast if you wish." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 164)

Fasting whilst travelling is optional, so there is no sin on the one who chooses not to fast whilst on a journey if they feel that it will weaken them. Allah (SWT) has allowed man not to fast, whilst travelling because He knows that his slaves may not be able to cope.

Anas reported "We were with the Prophet (pbuh) on a journey. Some of us had been observing the fast and some of us had not been fasting. We got down at a place on a hot day. Most of us had the cloth for shelter. There were also those amongst us who sheltered themselves against the rays of the sun with the help of their hands. The observers of the fast fell down (on account of weakness). Those who had not observed it got up and pitched tents and watered the mounts. Thereupon the Prophet (pbuh) said "The breakers of the fast have taken away the reward today". (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2484)

RECITATION OF AL-QUR'AN DURING RAMADAN

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down Al-Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgement (Between right and wrong)". (Al-Qur'an 2:185)

The entire month of Ramadan is in essence a celebration of Al-Qur'an's revelation, which is described as a ***"Guide and Mercy for those who do good." (Al-Qur'an 31:3).*** Ramadan celebrates God's Mercy by which He sent a guiding light in Al-Qur'an that leads human life towards the path of good and virtue and protects the human soul from evil and vice. Al-Qur'an is life, spirit, salvation, happiness, reward and recompense. It is a divine teaching, a constitution and eternal wisdom.

Prophet (pbuh) said, "Read Al-Qur'an for surely it will be an intercessor for you on the Day of Judgement". (Sahih Muslim Book 4 No 1757)

In his final year, the Prophet (pbuh) recited the Al-Qur'an twice in Ramadan. Muslims should try to read the entire Al-Qur'an at least once during Ramadan.

Many others read or recite Al-Qur'an during Taraweeh Prayers (Ramadan nightly prayers), which are held only during Ramadan, or in private late night Prayers called Tahajjud.

However the common practice these days is that Taraweeh prayers are rushed in order to complete Al-Qur'an. This goes against the teaching of Islam as Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an: "***and recite Al-Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones." (73:4).*** Commenting on this Ibn Kathir says this means "recite it slowly, for that will help in understanding Al-Qur'an and contemplating it. This is how the Prophet (pbuh) used to recite". Although it is desirable to complete Al-Qur'an in Ramadan to follow the sunnah, it should be read with understanding and contemplation in order to draw closer to Allah (SWT) by increasing our guidance insh'Allah.

The Prophet (pbuh) said "Fast three days a month." 'Abdullah said, "I am able to fast more than that." They kept on arguing on this matter till the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Fast on alternate days, and recite the whole Qur'an once a month." 'Abdullah said, "I can recite more (in a month)," and the argument went on till the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Recite the Qur'an once each three days." (i.e. you must not recite the whole Qur'an in less than three days). (Sahih Bukhari, **Volume 3,** ***Book 31, No. 199)***

Therefore we are encouraged to read Al-Qur'an often but should not try to complete it in less than seven days as we should be learning from it and implementing Allah (SWT)'s commands and laws into our lives. Therefore we should not just read it without meaning.

Muslims who cannot read Arabic well, should spend some time each day listening to a tape or CD of Al-Qur'an being recited. Muslims consider Ramadan to be a good time to get into the habit of reading at least some of Al-Qur'an or its translation every day, and if they haven't read either of them cover to cover, Ramadan is the time to do it.

TARAWEEH PRAYER

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Whoever observes night prayer in Ramadan as an expression of his faith and to seek reward from Allah, his previous sins will be blotted out".
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 226)

Muslims should during this month make an extra effort to perform Taraweeh Prayer (Ramadan nightly prayer), preferably in congregation. Taraweeh has a special merit over other nights. Taraweeh is part of physical and spiritual training, for its observation soon after Iftaar insures timely and proper digestion of food. There are also spiritual rewards awaiting the observers of this prayer. It must be mentioned here that Taraweeh prayers, although very beneficial to read, are not compulsory as stated by the Prophet (pbuh) himself.

'A'isha reported that Prophet (pbuh) prayed one night in the mosque and people also prayed along with him. He then prayed on the following night and there were many persons. Then on the third or fourth night (many people) gathered there, but the Prophet (pbuh) did not come out to them (for leading the Tarawih prayer). When it was morning he said: "I saw what you were doing, but I desisted to come to you (and lead the prayer) for I feared that this prayer might become obligatory for you". (He the narrator) said: It was the month of Ramadan.

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 13, Number 46)

CHARITY IN RAMADAN

It is reported that "The Prophet (pbuh) was naturally the most generous of people and he used to be more generous than ever in the month of Ramadan". (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 126)

Allah (SWT) has given you, so Muslims should try to give generously in Ramadan, both Sadaqah (optional charity) and Zakaah (obligatory charity). Every time a servant of Allah (SWT) gives something in charity Allah (SWT) eases his physical, spiritual and mental conditions. He expands for him His sustenance**.** Sadaqah does not only have to be money. It can also be a good deed—such as helping another person—done for the sake of Allah (SWT) and without expecting any reward from the person. Even a smile is considered charity in Islam. Most Muslims pay their Zakaah during Ramadan because the reward is so much greater in that month. Wealth is like water, if its flow is obstructed it becomes brackish, and if it flows, it becomes sweet and fresh.

The Prophet (pbuh) said "This is the month of charity in which believer's sustenance is increased. Whosoever feeds a fasting person or gives a fasting person a single date or a sip of water, to break the fast, for him there shall be forgiveness of his sins and he will be saved from the fire of hell, and for him shall be the same reward as for him (whom he fed)".

(Tirmidhi Hadith 1965)

Because of the great reward for feeding a fasting person, in many places 'Iftaar'(the breaking of the fast at sunset) is served in mosques, with the food donated or brought by individuals to share. This contact between the various levels of society helps to create a real bond of brotherhood in the Muslim community.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "When a man dies all of his deeds come to an end, except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge which is benefited from, or pious offspring who pray for them."

(Sahih Muslim, Book 013, Number 4005)

The Prophet (pbuh) enjoined Zakaah on those who fast to purify them from any indecent act or deeds. It is a sort of purification of the soul on the individual level, a cure against miserliness, and a social safety net. The rich are obliged to come in contact with the poor and the poor with the even less fortunate. Zakaah provides for the poor and spares them the humiliation of asking for charity.

HOW THE BLESSED MONTH RAMADAN STARTS

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Do not fast till you see the new moon, and do not break fast till you see it, but if the weather is cloudy calculate about it." (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2363)

It is very important to start the best month in the Islamic year correctly. It is very clear in Al-Qur'an and Sunnah that we should look for the moon and if it is sighted then the month has started. It is also clear that we should look for the moon in our own country of residence as stated in the hadith below:

Umm Fadl said, "I saw the new moon (of Ramadan) on Friday". Abdullah b. 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) asked me (about the new moon of Ramadan) and said "When did you see it?" I said "We saw it on the night of Friday". He said "Did you see it yourself?" I said "Yes" and the people also saw it and they observed fast and Mu'awiya also observed fast, whereupon he said "But we saw it on Saturday night. So we would continue to observe fast till we complete thirty (fasts) or we see it (the new moon of Shawwal)". I said "Is the sighting of the moon by Mu'awiya not valid for you?" He said "No, this is how The Prophet (pbuh) has commanded us".

(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2391)

ETTIQUETTES OF RAMADAN

The Prophet (pbuh) said "He who does not determine to fast before dawn does not fast". (Abu Dawud, **Book 13, Number 2448)**

We should try our best to get up for Sehri.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Eat a little before dawn (Sehri) as there is blessings in taking meal at that time."
(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2412)

Many people are deprived of this great blessing because of their own laziness. Even if there is no food, then one date should be eaten or a drink of water taken. The period before dawn is considered blessed because it is in the last third of the night, the time of divine descent and forgiveness. It is another special time when du'as are accepted.

Some time should be left after taking the suhoor and before the Fajr adhan / prayer:

"We took the suhur with the Prophet (pbuh) . Then he stood for the prayer." I asked, "What was the interval between the suhur and the Adhan?" He replied, "The interval was sufficient to recite fifty verses of the Quran." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 144)

It is also narrated that even when the Fajr adhan was made, it was not necessarily the time to stop eating because the true dawn arises when the streaks of the whiteness of dawn are horizontal. However these days this is difficult to ascertain in some countries and in these circumstances we should keep enough time to eat to be confident that we are not eating when dawn appears.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The adhan of Bilal may not mislead you with regard to your food at the commencement of the fast, nor the vertical (streaks) of whiteness in the horizon (for it is an indication of false dawn). You should stop eating (food) till (the whiteness) spreads like it. Hammad narrated it and with the gesture of his band he explained, the horizontal position (of the streaks of light)."
(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2409)

We should hasten to break our fasts.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The people will remain on right path as long as they hasten breaking of the fast (Iftaar). (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 178 & Muslim, Book 006, Number 2417)

To eat dates to break one's fast is a Sunnah.

The Prophet (pbuh) said "When one of you is fasting, he should break his fast with dates, but if he cannot get any, then (he should break his fast) with water, for water is purifying". (Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2348)

It is also very important that we do not delay the Maghrib salah unnecessarily and pray soon after breaking the fast.

Abu 'Atiyya reported "I and Misruq went to 'A'isha (Allah be pleased with her) and Masruq said to her "There are two persons among the Companions of Muhammad (pbuh) none of whom abandons the good, but one of them hastens to observe sunset prayer and break the fast, and the other delays in observing the sunset prayer and in breaking the fast", whereupon she said "Who hastens to observe sunset prayer and break the fast?" He said "It is 'Abdullah". Upon this she said "This is how The Prophet (pbuh) used to do. (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2419)

It is a Sunnah to use Miswaak.

"The Prophet (pbuh) chewed Miswaak while fasting".
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 154)

It is recommended to take care of the mouth, teeth and gums all the time, and more so during fasting. This can be achieved by the use of Miswaak, a special stick or root (from Arak tree) that is used to cleanse the teeth and strengthen the gums.

The breath of the observer of fast is sweeter to Allah (SWT) than the fragrance of musk". (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 118 & Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2564)

DU'AS OF A FASTING PERSON

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "There are three whose supplication is not rejected, one who has just ended a fast, a just imam, and one who has been wronged whose supplication is raised by Allah above the clouds and for which the gates of Heaven are opened. Allah says, 'I swear by My might that I shall certainly help you, though it be after some time.'"

(Tirmidhi Hadith 2248)

The du'as of a fasting person is never refused**.** The final hour before the setting of the sun is one of the greatest hours of the day. Therefore submit before Allah (SWT) all your needs. However Muslims are generally so absorbed in eating that we neglect this opportunity.

The Prophet (pbuh) informed us that when a fasting Muslim prays for anything from Allah (SWT), he definitely receives one out of the following three things: He gets exactly what he asked for. Or Allah (SWT) either removes from his path some great calamity in exchange for what he desired. Or the reward for that which he prayed for is stored for the Hereafter.

Therefore, du'a is indeed very important, and to neglect it at any time is a matter of great loss. Should Allah (SWT) find that granting us what we beseech from Him is in our welfare and interest, He grants it, otherwise not. It should be borne in mind that there are certain conditions under which du'as are accepted, in the absence of these, du'a may be often rejected. When 'Haraam' is consumed, the du'as are not accepted. A person who fasts and breaks his fast with "Haraam" food, is like a sick person, who takes medicine as a cure, but also adds a little poison, which destroys him.

ASKING FORGIVENESS IN RAMADAN

The Prophet (pbuh) said "Let there be smeared with dust the nose of the person in whose presence I am mentioned, and he does not invoke blessing upon me, the one who has opportunity to see the month of Ramadan and it comes to an end without his securing pardon for himself and one who finds alive his aged parents, both of them or one of them, and through them (by serving them) he does not enter Paradise."

(Tirmidhi Hadith 927)

By this the Prophet (pbuh) meant the person who in Ramadan, the month of blessings and righteousness, who still spends the days in sin and disregards his duties, thus he doesn't gain forgiveness.

If he cannot gain Allah (SWT)'s pleasure in Ramadan, then when will he do so? The way to seek Allah (SWT)'s pardon for his sins is to fulfil his obligations in Ramadan as enjoined by Allah (SWT) such as fasting, offering 'Taraweeh' prayers and repentance on past sins. Those who are sincere with Allah (SWT) will find that all their sins throughout the year will be forgiven in Ramadan, if they avoid major sins. Even the fish in the sea seek forgiveness on their behalf until they break their fast.

The Prophet (pbuh) termed the <u>first</u> 10 days of Ramadan as period of Mercy, whereby Allah (SWT)'s mercy is showered on the believers. Those who express their gratitude to Allah (SWT) for his bounties, receive them in large measure as Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an says,

"If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you, But if you show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed." (Al-Quran 14:7)

The <u>second</u> 10 days of Ramadan is when forgiveness is granted to the believers as reward for the fasting during the first part. The <u>last</u> 10 days of Ramadan brings immunity from Hell. In Ramadan, you should endeavour to perform three things in great number:

1) 'Kalima Tayyiba' (Laa ilaha illala hu muhamadur rasulullah). If the seven heavens, the earth and all its occupants were placed in one pan of a scale and this 'Kalima' on the other, the 'Kalima' would outweigh everything.

2) 'Istighfaar' (Beg for Allah (SWT)'s forgiveness). Whoever says a great deal of 'Istighfaar', Allah (SWT) opens a way out for him from all difficulties and releases him from sorrows.

3) Beg for entry into Paradise and seek refuge with Allah (SWT) from the fire of 'Jahannam' (Hell).

LAYLATUL QADR (NIGHT OF POWER)

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "There is a night in the month which is ... better than a thousand months". (Al-Qur'an 97:3)

The night of "Laylatul Qadr" is described as being greater in blessedness and spiritual virtue than 1,000 months. Therefore fortunate is that person who attains the full blessings of this night by spending it in the worship of Allah (SWT).

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Seek Laylatul Qadr in the last ten nights. If one among you shows slackness and weakness in the earlier part of Ramadan, it should not be allowed to prevail upon him in last week".
(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2621)

During the last third of Ramadan, one should read more of Al-Qur'an and remember Allah (SWT) more often, even constantly. For Muslims, the last ten days should be a time to perfect one's fast and avoid anything that may break it. It is a time to give more charity and to settle disputes and forgive one another. It is also a time for soul searching, evaluating one's life, supplicating, and asking forgiveness. This should be done sincerely because if Allah (SWT) accepts the supplications, the reward is the remission of one's sins. The best time to do it is in the last part of the night.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "When the last one third of the night remains, Allah, the Glorious One, descends towards the lower heaven and proclaims "Is there anyone supplicating to Me, so that I grant his supplication? Is there anyone begging of Me for anything, so that I grant him his wish? Is there anyone who seeks My forgiveness, so I forgive him?" (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 75, Number 333)

Allah (SWT) has concealed the exact date of the Night of Power so that we would double our efforts during the last ten days. He is also testing the serious and the non-serious. The seriously interested person will search for it late at night and in the early hours until he or she attains it, regardless of the hardship.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever stands in prayers and worships on the night of Power, with complete faith and sincere hope of gaining reward, all his previous sins are forgiven".
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 226)

It is recommended to seek the night and spend it diligently in devotion, including night Sunnah prayers (Tahajjud) and recitation of Al-Qur'an. This citation indicates that regardless of whether a person knows the night or not Allah (SWT) will grant forgiveness for previous shortcomings.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to exert himself in devotion during the last ten nights to a greater extent than at any other time.
(Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2644)

During this time, he limited his contact with people and intensified his supplications and du'as to Allah (SWT). The Prophet (pbuh) did this in order to attune his heart even more with Allah (SWT) and to free his mind from the concerns of the world.

With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, The Prophet (pbuh) used to work hard and used to offer Salaat (prayers) all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the Salaat (prayers).
(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 241)

ITIKAAF

The Prophet (pbuh) mentioned that he would practice Itikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan. 'Aisha asked his permission to perform Itikaf and he permitted her. (Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 33, Number 261)

It used to be the general practice of the Prophet (pbuh) to perform Itikaaf (secluding oneself in the Mosque) in the Holy month of Ramadhan.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to observe Itikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan. One year he did not observe Itikaf. When the next year came, he observed Itikaf for twenty nights (i.e. days).
(Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2457)

COMPENSATION FOR FASTS MISSED IN RAMADAN

Allah (SWT) has stated very clearly the action to be taken if there is a valid excuse for missing a fast of Ramadan.

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Qur'an, "(Observing Saum – fasts, for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days. And as for those who can fast with difficulty, (e.g. an old man, etc.), they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a Miskeen (poor person) (for every day). But whoever does good of his own accord, it is better for him. And that you fast, it is better for you if only you knew." (Al-Qur'an 2:184)

In addition to the sick and the old, the Prophet (pbuh) also mentioned other categories of people that are allowed to miss a fast of Ramadan:

Allah has remitted half the prayer to a traveller, and fasting to the traveller, the woman who is suckling an infant and the woman who is pregnant, I swear by Allah, he (the Prophet (pbuh) mentioned both (i.e. suckling and pregnant women) or one of them.
(Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2402)

However if someone misses a fast without a valid reason then even if he fasts for the rest of his life, he will not be able to make up this one fast:

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "If anyone breaks his fast one day in Ramadan without a concession granted to him by Allah, a perpetual fast will not atone for it." (Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2390)

Prophet (pbuh) stated the action to take for one who broke a fast in Ramadan.

A man broke the fast in Ramadan and the Prophet (pbuh), ordered him to make kaffara by freeing a slave, or fasting two consecutive months, or feeding sixty poor people, and he said, "I can't do it." Someone brought a large basket of dates to the Prophet, and he said, "Take this and give it away as sadaqa." He said, "Prophet (pbuh), there is none more needy than I am." The Prophet (pbuh), laughed until his eye-teeth appeared, and then he said, "Eat them." (Muwatta, Book 18, Number 18.9.28)

If in Ramadan, any of the days of fasting were missed, they must be made up for before the next Ramadan. Muslims generally should try to make up for them as soon as possible because any days that are missed are considered as a debt to Allah (SWT).

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever died and he ought to have fasted (the missed days of Ramadan) then his guardians must fast on his behalf."
(Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 173)

FASTING IN SHAWWAL

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever observes the Ramadan fast and follows it with six days of fast in Shawwal, it is as if he has fasted Dahr (the whole year)". (Sahih Muslim, Book 006, Number 2614)

Shawwal is the tenth month in the lunar calendar. The first of Shawwal is Eid- ul-Fitr. After the festivity of Eid it is recommended to observe six days of fast. This fast may be observed continuously non-break, or it may be observed one day at a time.

DU'AS FOR BREAKING THE FAST

وَبِكَ امَنْتُ وَ عَلى رِزْقِكَ اَفْطَرْتُ اللَّهُمَّ اِنِّى لَكَ صُمْتُ

Allahumma inni laka sumtu wa bika aamantu wa 'ala rizq-ika aftarthu

(O Allah! I fasted for You and I believe in You and I break my fast with Your sustenance)
(Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2351)

الْعُرُوقُ، وَ ثَبَتَ الأَجْرُ إنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَ ابْتَلَّتِ

dhahabadh-dhama'u wab-tallatil 'urūūqi, wa thabatal arju inshaAllah

(The thirst is gone, the veins are moistened and the reward is confirmed, if Allah Wills)
(Abu Dawud, Book 13, Number 2350)